

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 NEA-10 EUR-12 HA-05 SP-02  
USIA-06 AID-05 EB-08 NSC-05 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-07  
OMB-01 CEA-01 COME-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 DOE-11 SOE-02 /136 W  
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R 170833Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2986  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
USSMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1133

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DEPT. PLEASE PASS TO MID-EAST POSTS AS APPROPRIATE

E.O.11652: N/A  
TAGS: PEPR, XF, IS, MY  
SUBJECT:OFFICIAL MALAYSIAN REACTION TO MID-EAST RAIDS

REF: A) KUALA LUMPUR 2178 (NOTAL, B) 77 KUALA LUMPUR 8816

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ON 16 MARCH MALAYSIAN FOREIGN  
MINISTER TENGKU RITHAUDDEEN ISSUED STRONGLY-WORDED  
STATEMENT CONDEMNING ISRAELI RETALIATIONS IN  
LEBANON AS "BLATANT AGGRESSION." RITHAUDDEEN SAID  
THAT ISRAELI RAIDS WILL IMPAIR CHANCES FOR PEACE,  
AND HE CALLED ON "ALL POWERS CONCERNED TO TAKE  
EFFECTIVE ACTION". AT THE SAME TIME HE STATED THAT  
PEACE MUST BE SOUGHT URGENTLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST,  
BUT CAN BE REALIZED ONLY WHEN THE ISRAELIS ACKNOWL-  
EDGE "THE LEGITIMATE AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF  
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THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS  
FOR A HOMELAND." LOCAL PRESS ECHOED THESE THEMES  
IN EDITORIALIZING ON LATEST CYCLE OF  
MIDEAST VIOLENCE. THESE EXPRESSIONS OF ANTI-  
ISRAEL PRO-ARAB/PALESTINIAN SENTIMENTS ARE CON-  
SISTENT WITH GOM'S GENERAL PRO-ARAB FOREIGN POLICY  
ORIENTATION. FACT THEY ARE MORE STRIDENT THAN

NORMAL PROBABLY DERIVES IN PART IF NOT EXCLUSIVELY FROM MALAYSIAN SENSITIVITY TO PRESENCE HERE OF LARGE DELEGATION OF ARAB LUMINARIES ATTENDING ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK MEETING. END SUMMARY.

2. MARCH 16 MFA STATEMENT RELEASED IN FOREIGN MINISTER'S NAME READS AS FOLLOWS: "MALAYSIA CONDEMNS ISRAELI ACTION IN LEBANON. THIS BLATANT AGGRESSION VIOLATES THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON AND SERIOUSLY UNDERMINES PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. MALAYSIA CALLS UPON ALL POWERS CONCERNED TO TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION FOR AN IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI TROOPS FROM LEBANON. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT A PEACEFUL AND JUST SOLUTION BE URGENTLY FOUND IN THE MIDDLE EAST TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE LEGITIMATE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS TO A HOMELAND."

3. AFTER THE PALESTINIAN COMMANDO RAID OF MARCH 11, AN EDITORIAL IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEW STRAITS TIMES (NST) CALLED ON ISRAEL TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF ATTACK-COUNTERATTACK. MALAYSIA HAS GIVEN LOW-KEY SUPPORT TO SADAT'S PEACE EFFORTS, BUT THIS WEEK THE PRESS FELL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHORT OF CONDEMNING THE INITIAL PALESTINIAN RAID, REFERRING ONLY TO THE IRONY INHERENT IN A RAID DESIGNED TO SABOTAGE PEACE EFFORTS WHICH WOULD POTENTIALLY BENEFIT THE PALESTINIANS MORE THAN ANY OTHER PARTY. TODAY'S (MARCH 16) NST EDITORIAL LAMENTS ISRAEL'S SUBSEQUENT DEMAND OF "AN EYE FOR A TOOTH," IMPLYING TH REPRISALS WERE HARSHER THAN THE PALESTINIAN RAID ITSELF, AND CONCLUDES THAT THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THE WEEK IS THE DESPERATION OF THE PALESTINIANS AND THE NECESSITY FOR RECOGNIZING THEIR "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS".

4. THESE PRESS COMMENTS AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH MALAYSIA'S PRO-ARAB STANCE ON MIDEAST MATTERS, ALTHOUGH THE WORDING IS SOMEWHAT HARSHER THAN NORMAL. WE ATTRIBUTE THIS PARTIALLY IF NOT EXCLUSIVELY TO THE FACT THAT KUALA LUMPUR IS CURRENTLY THE VENUE FOR A MAJOR ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK CONFERENCE. INCLUDED AMONG THE ARAB/ISLAMIC LUMINARIES IN TOWN ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF A

NUMBER OF NATIONS EITHER AMBIVALENT TOWARD  
OR OPPOSED TO SADAT'S PEACE MOVES (THE NST  
TODAY FRONTPAGED PHOTO OF THE MALAYSIA FINANCE  
MINISTER IN DISCUSSION WITH LIBYAN SECRETARY  
OF THE TREASURY, AND A PAPER YESTERDAY SHOWED  
A GROUP PICTURE IN WHICH THE P.L.O. REPRESENTATIVE TO THE I.D.B. WAS IDENTIFIED) AND  
UNDOUBTEDLY SOME OF THIS RHETORIC IS AIMED AT  
THEM. NOT ONLY ARE THE MALAYSIANS ANXIOUS, FOR  
DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, TO BE PERCEIVED AS  
ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD, BUT THEY  
ALSO HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY SEEKING TO ATTRACT  
PETRO DOLLARS TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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